

Letter from Arthur W. McCurdy to Alexander Graham Bell, October 26, 1899

"F" folder 1331 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D.C. October 26th. 1899. Dear Mr. Bell: —

I was very glad to receive your note of the 17th, instant and know that you would be in Washington soon. I want very much to see you and talk over a lot of matters.

I am sorry you did not enclose your new map, for next to news of your visit to Caribou Camp I would be glad to see a description of the place itself. I am always glad to receive a letter from you even a short one.

Now that I have another step in advance in regard to my work here I will write you again on the subject.

I went to New York last week to conclude terms with the American Hard Rubber Company regarding the prices for manufacture of Ebedecs. While in New York Mr. Totten arranged that I should meet Mr. Adams of the Scovill and Adams Company, wholesale dealers in photographic supplies, for the purpose of satisfying himself as to the practicability of my apparatus. Mr. Totten saw Mr. Adams who said he did not know of any practicable apparatus and if his friend (myself) had anything of that kind the best plan would be to take it to the Eastman Company. But Mr. Totten said that he wished to be interested in the apparatus himself financially and would be very glad of his (Mr. Adams') advice as a matter of friendship. Thereupon Mr. Adams said he would be glad to see me at two o'clock on Friday afternoon. At the time appointed Mr. Totten and I were at the office. As soon as Mr. Adams saw the apparatus he said this is not what I expected — and at once became interested. After examining it for about an hour he asked me to make a demonstration on the following Monday. Well that was a long time for me to stay but I felt it would be

Library of Congress

money and time well spent and consented. On Monday at two we met Mr. Lamotte, Vice-President of the Company, and Mr. Price the manager with Mr. Adams the President. First they wished to see the mechanism of the machine, and then see a film developed. All were skeptical and looked so, excepting the President. When I opened my camera and Mr. Lamotte saw a bare film with no paper of any kind upon it he exclaimed Oh! He thought the film would be ruined. But when they all looked in the box and saw the development well under way their expression changed to one of surprise and then to interest. The film developed well and was fixed. Then the future of the apparatus was discussed and a scheme of manufacture and sale mapped out by Mr. Adams in which he suggested to give me half of 2 the net profits which he figured at about five dollars per Ebedec, and said that they could dispose of five hundred or a thousand as soon as they could get them.

This seemed to Mr. Totten doing pretty well for the first offer. Afterwards Mr. Totten said he thought Adams might be induced to close an arrangement for sixty per cent. I said that I could not entertain any business proposition at that time. I had not come before this for that purpose. I would have to return to Washington and consult with Mr. Charles Bell who would act in the matter in a business way for me.

This evening I spent at Twin Oaks. Took dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Hubbard. During the evening the whole matter was gone into. Tomorrow morning Mr. Bell will look up the standing of Messrs. Scovill and Adams and if all is satisfactory will make an engagement to meet Mr. Adams at once.

I took the apparatus out to Twin Oaks with me and all were interested in it.

My impression is that I should go on to Akron, Ohio with the machine myself to the Hard Rubber Company and see that the manufacture is pushed so that we will be sure to have as large a number per day made as possible. I fear that if I depend on correspondence that time will be lost. Probably therefore I shall leave for Akron on Monday next, the 30th. instant, and be back here when you arrive. I wish you would telegraph me here the date of

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your arrival in Washington so that I may be sure to be here to meet you. Mr. Charles Bell says that at present he is inclined to think my best plan would be to make an arrangement for royalty. However will think of the matter and come here to supper with me tomorrow afternoon, see a film developed, and settle details I may say that Scovill and Adams are just putting a solution on the market which develops and fixes a file at the same time. They are anxious to combine my apparatus with their developer.

I was quite surprised to find that you enjoyed the woods so much and that you had gone out again so soon after returning. I am only sorry that I have had Baddeck cut out of my life this year.

Sincerely yours, Arthur McCurdy